She

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Prologue

This is a collection of views from different personalities about ‘Women’. I am always very curious about knowing how women see the world and at their own nature and existence. Many people throughout history have developed different view on women. Women themselves are more interested in knowing their own nature. They are so fascinating than more you know them you realize how little you know. They are open secret to be kept secret again.

~ Manas Ranjan Murmu

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Her story started with 'mother nature' and 'fertility force' then reduced to goddess , deities, witch and then to second human. Then she became the protector of the society. The guardian of the family. A secret lover who could not divide her love not ever for herself. Her struggle was not to unite but to get separated from herself and the world. She is the art, the beauty itself.

Inferior - *Aristotle*

Aristotle's views on women were complex and have been the subject of much interpretation and debate. While some of his statements suggest a belief in female inferiority, other aspects of his philosophy indicate a more nuanced perspective. He believed that women were physically and intellectually inferior to men by nature. He argued that women were colder and less capable of producing semen, which he considered the active principle in generation. He viewed women as providing only the passive matter. In his work *On the Generation of Animals*, he even described a woman as a "deformed male." While Aristotle acknowledged that women possessed a rational soul, he believed their capacity for reason "lacked authority" or was "without full deliberative capacity" (*Politics*). This was often interpreted to mean that women were less capable of self-control and were more governed by their emotions. Based on his perceived natural differences, Aristotle argued for distinct social roles for men and women. He believed the household was the fundamental unit of society, with men naturally suited to rule and engage in politics, while women were suited for domestic tasks and subservience to men. He stated in *Politics* that "the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject. Aristotle suggested that the virtues of men and women differed. He believed a woman's virtue primarily concerned managing the household and obeying her husband, while a man's virtue

involved reason, courage, and political participation. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle stated that a society could not be happy unless women were happy too, suggesting he recognized the importance of women's well-being. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argued that a virtuous woman should both be governed and govern within the household, indicating a role for female leadership in the private sphere.Some scholars point to passages where Aristotle describes women as having a heightened capacity for rational learning (*mathimatikoteron*), being more thoughtful in child-rearing (*phrontistikotera*), and possessing superior memory (*mnemonikoteron*). He also noted their political discernment, especially concerning child upbringing. While his "single-seed" theory emphasized the male contribution to generation, his recognition that children could resemble their mothers suggests an acknowledgment of some female contribution beyond just the material. Some interpretations suggest that Aristotle's more restrictive views on women in *Politics* might have been influenced by the prevailing social norms of his time and aimed at addressing concerns about social order and the stability of the *polis*.

Aristotle's views on women are undeniably marked by what we would today consider sexism. He drew upon biological arguments and prevailing social hierarchies to justify the subordination of women and their exclusion from political life. However, a closer examination of his broader philosophical works reveals some nuances and acknowledgments of women's capacities, particularly within the domestic sphere and in certain intellectual

areas. It's crucial to understand his views within their historical context while also recognizing their lasting and often negative influence on Western thought.

Ruler- *Cleopatra*

Cleopatra actively cultivated an image as a living goddess, particularly associating herself with Isis, a powerful and revered Egyptian deity. This was a strategic move to legitimize her rule and connect with her Egyptian subjects. She likely saw herself as divinely appointed to rule and protect Egypt. As the last active pharaoh of Egypt, Cleopatra was deeply conscious of her lineage and the long history of Egyptian rulers. She likely viewed herself as the inheritor of this powerful tradition and responsible for maintaining Egypt's independence and prosperity. Cleopatra understood the symbolic power she held as the ruler of Egypt. Her actions and image were inextricably linked to the fate and perception of her kingdom in the eyes of both her own people and foreign powers.Ancient sources, even those written by her detractors, acknowledge Cleopatra's sharp intellect, her command of multiple languages (reportedly up to a dozen), and her education in philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. She likely saw herself as an intelligent and capable ruler, able to navigate complex political landscapes. Plutarch famously noted that while her beauty was not necessarily breathtaking, her "irresistible charm" and persuasive speaking voice made her captivating. Cleopatra likely recognized and utilized her charisma as a powerful tool in diplomacy and governance.Her political maneuvering, including her relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, demonstrates a shrewd and assertive approach to

maintaining her power and Egypt's interests. She likely viewed herself as a strategic player on the world stage, willing to take risks to achieve her goals. Even in the face of Roman dominance, Cleopatra fiercely guarded her royal status and the sovereignty of Egypt. Her reported defiance of Octavian's plans to parade her in a Roman triumph ("I will not be led in a triumph") suggests a deep-seated pride and determination to die as a queen rather than be humiliated as a captive. Her efforts to secure the succession for her son Caesarion indicate a concern for the future of her dynasty and Egypt's independence. She likely saw herself as a protector of her lineage and the Egyptian kingdom.

Historical evidence suggests she likely viewed herself as a divinely connected ruler, an intelligent and charismatic leader, a proud inheritor of Egyptian tradition, and a determined queen who fiercely protected her kingdom and her own dignity**.** Her self-perception was likely intertwined with her role as the embodiment of Egypt and its last hope for independence in a rapidly changing world.

Instrument– *Kautilya*

Kautilya's views on women, as detailed in his treatise *Arthashastra*, present a complex picture. While some interpretations highlight instances where women are seemingly placed in a subordinate position, a comprehensive analysis reveals a more nuanced perspective where women are recognized as having specific roles and rights within the societal framework of the time. He acknowledged the significance of women in managing the household. He stipulated that a man could not renounce the world (*vanaprastha ashram*) without ensuring the livelihood of his wife and sons. Women were not confined solely to domestic roles. The *Arthashastra* mentions women engaged in various professions, including trade, agriculture, and labour. They could also serve the state in different capacities. Interestingly, Kautilya recognized the potential of women in intelligence gathering. He mentions women working as spies and informers for the state. The text also discusses the role of women in the king's harem. He emphasized the responsibility of men to provide for their wives and families. Kautilya recognizes a woman's right to own property in the form of jewelry and means of subsistence. While there were expectations that this would benefit the family, a woman had some autonomy over its use. However, their rights to ancestral property and other significant assets were limited. While the text acknowledges the husband's right to inflict limited physical punishment on his wife, it also provides avenues

for women to seek protection against torture, oppression, and defamation. His views on remarriage differed based on the type of marriage. Women in the first four "approved" forms of marriage could not remarry, while those in the other four "unapproved" forms had provisions for remarriage, albeit with certain conditions. Divorce was permissible under specific circumstances for both men and women. A woman who disliked her husband could seek separation after a certain period, with conditions regarding the return of dowry and jewelry.

Kautilya's views on women were a reflection of the socio-political norms of his era. While he acknowledged women's contributions to society and granted them certain rights, his framework largely operated within a patriarchal structure that often placed men in positions of authority. His primary focus was on the stability and welfare of the state, and his regulations concerning women were often framed within this context.

It's important to avoid anachronistic judgments. While his views may not align with modern concepts of gender equality, understanding them within their historical context provides valuable insights into the social dynamics of ancient India during the Mauryan period. Some scholars argue that within the constraints of his time, Kautilya provided a degree of protection and recognition for women that was significant.

Self Lover – *Sappho*

Sappho, the renowned lyric poet from ancient Lesbos, predominantly focused her poetry on the lives, emotions, and experiences of women within her social circle. While only fragments of her extensive work survive, these remnants offer a compelling glimpse into her perspectives on women and their relationships.

A significant portion of Sappho's poetry explores the deep emotional connections between women. These poems express a wide spectrum of feelings, ranging from profound affection, admiration, and longing to jealousy, sorrow at separation, and the bittersweet pangs of love. Her verses often capture the nuances of intimacy and the powerful impact women had on each other's lives. For example, in Fragment 31, often referred to as the "Ode to Anactoria" (though the name is a later conjecture), the speaker vividly describes the overwhelming physical and emotional sensations experienced when in the presence of a beloved woman. Fragment 94 poignantly portrays the pain of parting between two women, emphasizing their shared memories and deep connection. Sappho frequently celebrates the beauty of young women, employing vivid imagery and sensual language. Her descriptions often focus on physical attributes, grace, and the captivating nature of their presence. This admiration sometimes carries undertones of romantic or erotic desire, which has led to much discussion about Sappho's own sexuality and the nature of relationships within her

circle. Her poetry also provides glimpses into the social and ritualistic lives of women in ancient Lesbos. She mentions dances, religious ceremonies, and gatherings where women played prominent roles. Her poems likely served various social functions within these female communities, perhaps sung at celebrations, lamentations, or during the initiation of young women. Sappho's voice is distinctly female, offering a rare perspective from a woman in a predominantly male-dominated literary landscape. Her poems articulate emotions and experiences that likely resonated deeply with her female contemporaries, providing insights into their inner lives and social interactions. Some interpretations of Sappho's role suggest she may have been involved in the education and guidance of young women, preparing them for marriage and adult life. Her poems could have served as part of this process, exploring themes of love, beauty, and social expectations.

Sappho's focus on women and her intense portrayal of their relationships have made her a significant figure in understanding female experiences in the ancient world. Her work offers a counterpoint to the often male-centered narratives that dominate classical literature. The interpretation of her poems, particularly those expressing strong affection or desire between women, has been a subject of ongoing scholarly debate, contributing to modern understandings of same-sex relationships and female sexuality in history. Regardless of the specific nature of these relationships, Sappho's poetry undeniably centers women, their emotions, and their interconnected

lives, granting them a powerful and enduring voice from antiquity.

Superior – *Tesla*

Tesla's early reverence for women stemmed from an almost romantic idealization, where he saw them as possessing delicate and superior qualities of mind and soul compared to men. He believed men were often inspired to great achievements through their devotion to women. However, as societal roles shifted, Tesla grew concerned, viewing women's attempts to achieve equality by imitating men in various aspects as a "tragedy" leading to a decline in civilization and a loss of the "old spirit of cooperation." Despite this apprehension, he also held a surprisingly progressive vision. Tesla foresaw a future where women, empowered by intellectual development spurred by technological advancements, would not only achieve equality but ultimately surpass men in intellect, leading to a new social order where women held a superior position. His perspective, therefore, was a fascinating interplay of traditional admiration, anxieties about changing gender dynamics, and a unique prediction of female intellectual ascendancy.

Resilient – *Ray*

Pratibha Ray, a celebrated Odia writer and academician, approaches the topic of women from a humanist perspective, emphasizing their inherent equality with men while also acknowledging and valuing their distinct qualities. While some critics have labeled her a feminist due to her focus on social equality and her exploration of female characters and their struggles, Ray identifies as a humanist, believing that men and women are created differently for the healthy functioning of society and that the special attributes of women should be nurtured. Her literary works often delve into the social injustices faced by women within a patriarchal framework, highlighting their resilience and challenging societal norms that lead to their suffering. In her reimagining of the epic Mahabharata in "Yajnaseni," she gives voice to Draupadi, portraying her as a woman with agency who questions the injustices she faces. Ray's overarching aim is to inspire social change and foster a social order based on equality, love, and justice for all, irrespective of gender.

Incomplete – *Freud*

Sigmund Freud's views on women were deeply rooted in the patriarchal culture of his time and are now largely considered outdated and controversial. His theories often portrayed women as fundamentally different from and, in some ways, inferior to men, heavily influenced by his concept of psychosexual development.

A central tenet of Freud's view was **"penis envy."** He theorized that during the phallic stage (around ages 3-5), girls realize they lack a penis, which he believed led to feelings of inferiority, a sense of being "castrated," and a lifelong desire for a substitute, often manifested as a wish for a child, particularly a son. Freud saw this "penis envy" as a crucial factor in shaping female psychology and contributing to feelings of jealousy and a sense of moral inferiority compared to men, who he believed developed a stronger superego due to castration anxiety.

Freud famously described female sexuality and psychology as a **"dark continent,"** admitting his limited understanding. He believed women's sexual development involved a shift of the primary erogenous zone from the clitoris (which he considered a "smaller penis") to the vagina, a transition towards a more "passive" female role in heterosexual intercourse, with the ultimate goal of motherhood. He also suggested that women were more prone to hysteria, linking it historically to the uterus.

It's important to note that Freud's theories on women have been heavily criticized by feminist scholars and later psychoanalysts. They argue that his views were based on cultural biases, a limited understanding of female experience, and a male-centric model of development. Critics like Karen Horney proposed concepts like "womb envy" to counter Freud's ideas and emphasized the role of social and cultural factors in shaping gender identity and psychology, rather than solely biological differences. While Freud acknowledged women possessed sexual passions, his overall framework often confined them to roles defined by their reproductive capabilities and in relation to male development.

Game Changer - *Das*

Kamala Das, a prominent Indian English poet, is widely regarded as a significant feminist voice of her time. Her views on women, expressed through her bold and confessional poetry and prose, challenged the patriarchal norms prevalent in Indian society. Das vehemently opposed the traditional image of the submissive and dutiful Indian wife, confined to domestic chores and subservient to her husband's desires. Her poems often depict the stifling nature of marriage and the loss of a woman's individual identity within it. She criticized the societal expectations that dictated how women should behave, dress, and express themselves. In "An Introduction," she famously wrote about being told to "Dress in sarees, be girl. Be wife... Fit in. Oh, Belong, cried the categorizers." This highlights her resistance to being confined by pre-defined roles. Das emphasized the importance of a woman's individuality and her right to exist as an independent entity, beyond her roles as a wife or mother. She asserted, "I am different; I am an entity." Das fearlessly addressed female sexuality and desire, topics considered taboo in the conservative Indian society of her time. She openly wrote about women's physical longings and their quest for sexual fulfillment, challenging the notion that female desire was secondary to male desire.Her work aimed to destigmatize women's sexual experiences and liberate them from the shame and silence imposed by societal norms. She celebrated the female body and its "endless female hungers."Das

explored the complexities of love and lust from a woman's perspective, often depicting the disappointment and frustration arising from relationships devoid of genuine emotional connection and dominated by mere physical needs. Her poems often critique the male ego and the selfishness she perceived in many male-female relationships. She portrayed men as being primarily interested in the physical aspects of a woman, often neglecting her emotional and psychological needs. Das's work poignantly illustrates the subordination and humiliation that women experience in a patriarchal society. She depicted women as being treated as objects or "toys" and their emotional sensitivities being repressed under male authority. Through her writing, Kamala Das became a powerful voice for women who were historically marginalized and oppressed in India. Her poetry gave voice to their pain, frustrations, and their yearning for freedom and equality. Das's work implicitly and explicitly championed women's rights to equality, self-determination, and freedom from societal constraints. She demanded social justice and sexual equality for women. Her bold and honest expression of female experiences served as a form of empowerment for other women, encouraging them to break free from societal shackles and assert their independence. While often focusing on man-woman relationships, some interpretations of her work also highlight the importance of female bonding and the support systems women can create for each other in the face of adversity.

In essence, Kamala Das's views on women were revolutionary for her time. She challenged the traditional,

patriarchal structures that limited women's lives, fearlessly explored female sexuality and desire, and gave a powerful voice to the experiences and struggles of women in Indian society. Her work continues to be celebrated for its feminist perspective and its significant contribution to Indian literature.

Independent – *Miyazaki*

Hayao Miyazaki, the acclaimed co-founder of Studio Ghibli, is renowned for creating animated films with strong, independent, and complex female characters. His views on women, reflected in his filmography and statements, consistently challenge traditional gender roles and celebrate female strength and individuality. Miyazaki frequently features girls and women as his protagonists. These characters are often brave, self-sufficient, and determined, taking charge of their own destinies rather than waiting to be rescued. Examples include Nausicaä in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Kiki in *Kiki's Delivery Service*, San in *Princess Mononoke*, Chihiro in *Spirited Away*, and Sophie in *Howl's Moving Castle*. He explicitly states, "Many of my movies have strong female leads – brave, self-sufficient girls that don't think twice about fighting for what they believe in with all their heart. They'll need a friend, or a supporter, but never a savior. Any woman is just as capable of being a hero as any [1] man." He actively avoids portraying women based on stereotypical tropes often seen in animation. His female characters are not merely relegated to love interests or damsels in distress. He presents a diverse range of female characters with different personalities, strengths, and flaws, making them feel believable and relatable. They can be warriors, ordinary individuals, young, old, mothers, daughters—but above all, they are complex human beings.The strength of Miyazaki's female characters often comes

from their inner resilience, determination, and compassion rather than solely from physical prowess.Even when faced with daunting challenges, they persevere and find their own solutions. For instance, Chihiro in *Spirited Away* starts as a seemingly ordinary and fearful girl but discovers immense courage and resourcefulness to save her parents.Miyazaki's films often subtly subvert traditional Japanese feminine conventions, where women are historically expected to be passive and domestic. His female characters actively participate in the public sphere and drive the storyline.He often depicts relationships between male and female characters based on mutual respect, friendship, or alliance rather than solely on romantic interests. He has expressed skepticism about the "unwritten rule" that a romance must ensue simply because a boy and girl appear in the same story, preferring to show relationships where they inspire each other to live.Miyazaki has cited his own mother, a strong woman who raised him and his brothers, as a significant influence on his portrayal of female characters. Many of his films feature maternal figures as sources of authority and strength. He also notes that he observes the women working at Studio Ghibli to create his female characters, highlighting the importance of real-life observation in crafting authentic portrayals. He has even stated his preference for working with women, recognizing their ability to persevere. Many critics and viewers consider Miyazaki's work to have a strong feminist sensibility. His films often pass the Bechdel test, featuring meaningful conversations between female characters that are not centered around men. His focus on female protagonists who are agents of

their own stories and who often challenge patriarchal structures resonates with feminist themes.

Hayao Miyazaki's views on women are deeply embedded in his filmmaking. He consistently champions strong, multifaceted female characters who defy stereotypes, exhibit remarkable inner strength, and actively shape their own narratives. His work offers a refreshing and empowering perspective on women in animation and cinema.

Silenced - *Ahmed*

Umera Ahmed’s works frequently explore the struggles women face in patriarchal societies to assert their identity, achieve self-realization, and gain autonomy. She often depicts the challenges women encounter due to restrictive cultural norms and traditions. Ahmed's narratives often critique patriarchal structures and the societal norms that limit women's social, spiritual, and intellectual freedom. Her work highlights instances of male dominance and the control exerted over women's bodies and choices, particularly in matters of marriage. Some analyses of her work frame it through the lens of Islamic feminism, highlighting how her characters sometimes defy societal expectations based on their understanding of Islamic principles that emphasize personal choice and consent. Her characters may challenge the passive roles often assigned to women in arranged marriages and seek a deeper, more meaningful connection with their faith, advocating for gender equality within an Islamic framework. However, Ahmed has clarified that she doesn't want to be labeled as a feminist, stating she presents a "very humanistic approach to stories." She emphasizes that if a character endures a heroic struggle, they should win, regardless of gender. Her female characters are often central to the narrative and face moral, spiritual, and emotional conflicts. Some analyses suggest that while seemingly raising a

voice for oppressed women, some of her narratives might inadvertently reinforce the idea of women being subservient to societal norms and traditions.

There's a discussion around whether her portrayal of female characters showcases their inner strength and resilience or if some characters are depicted as passively accepting hardship. Some critics argue that certain female protagonists are presented as "pliant" and focused on their imperfections, ultimately reinforcing patriarchal expectations. Some interpretations of her work focus on the journey of female characters towards self-discovery and empowerment, even within challenging circumstances. The concept of "self-realization" for women, enabling them to understand their duties in articulating religious knowledge and achieving spiritual fulfillment, is explored in the analysis of her novel *The Perfect Mentor*. Empowerment is sometimes examined in her work through the lens of a character's agency, their inner strength to make decisions, take a stand, and speak out.